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ABSTRACT

The first of a series of booklets for parents of deaf blind children presents basic information on using hearing aids. Suggestions are given for protecting the aid and putting in the child's earmold. Parents are advised to put the aid on every day and do simple activities involving music and speech. Keeping a record during listening time is encouraged to monitor progress toward goals. (CL)

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Beginning to Use a Hearing Aid

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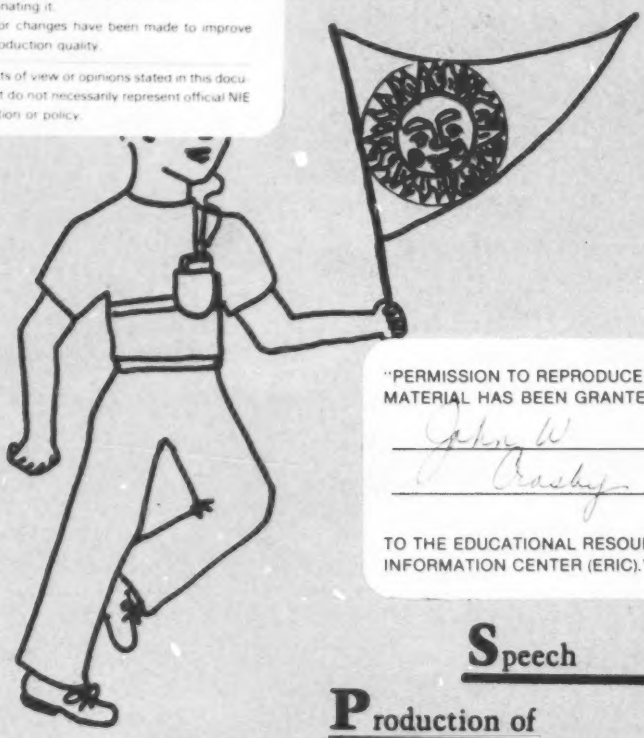

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Steps Toward Effective Production of Speech (STEPS)

A Set of Booklets for Parents of Deaf-Blind Children

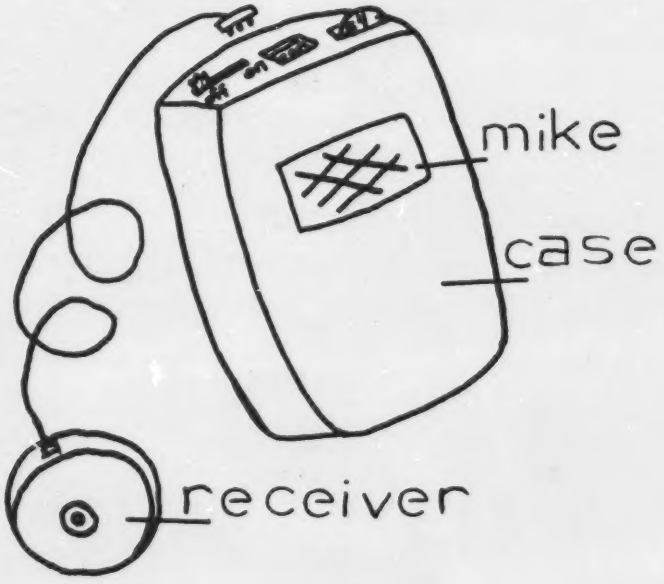
Eugene C. Sheeley
Doris McQuiddy

The University of Alabama —
Speech and Hearing Center
Program for
Deaf-Blind Children
Partlow State School and Hospital
1979

PROTECT THE HEARING AID

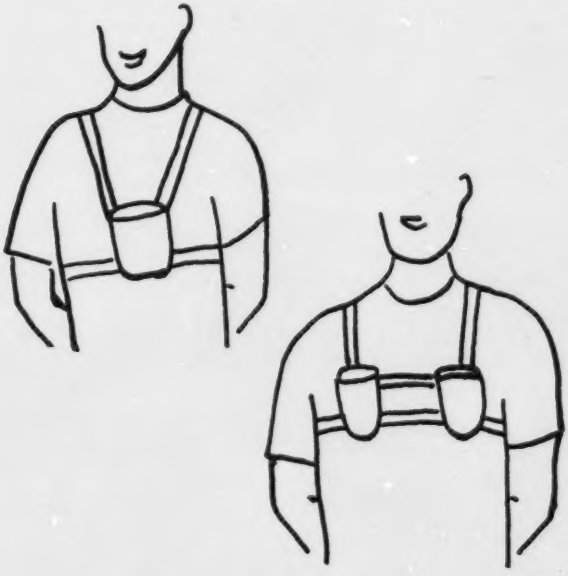
Hearing aids break easily. If you handle an aid with care, it is less likely to break. With good care a hearing aid should last four or five years.

Check your child's hearing aid just before putting it on. After he learns to wear it all day, check it



twice a day. If he has an aid in each ear, check each one. STEPS booklet number 5 tells about checking a hearing aid and taking care of it.

After checking the hearing aid you are ready to put it on your child. The safest way to wear an aid is in a harness. It has straps



over the shoulders and around the chest. In the front is a pocket for the hearing aid. Usually the pocket is in the middle. But some harnesses have a pocket on each side.

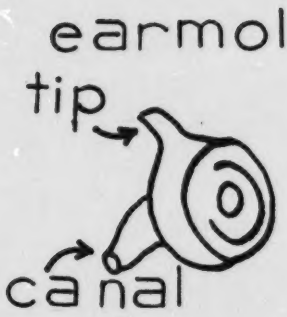
If your child drools or spills food a lot, this may hurt the hearing aid. To protect it, use a harness with a side pocket. If your child eats with his right hand, put the aid in the left pocket. Ask the

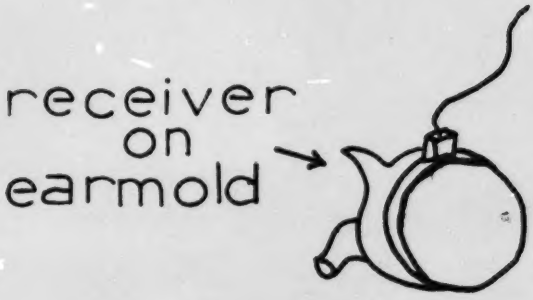
person who sold the hearing aid to get you the right kind of harness. You may also want to ask about a cover for the opening where the sound goes in. The cover will protect the "mike" from drooling and spilling.

A child who falls down a lot should also wear his hearing aid on the side. This may keep it from being hit as hard.

PUTTING IN THE EARMOLD

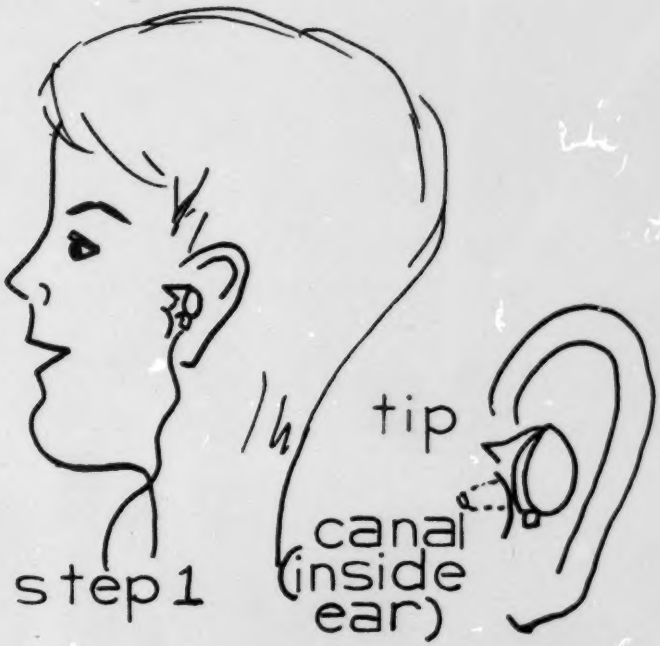
After you put the case in the harness, you are ready to put in the earmold. First, turn the hearing aid off. Next, snap the receiver in the earmold. On the next page you see the earmold has a **tip** and a **canal.** The canal part has a hole





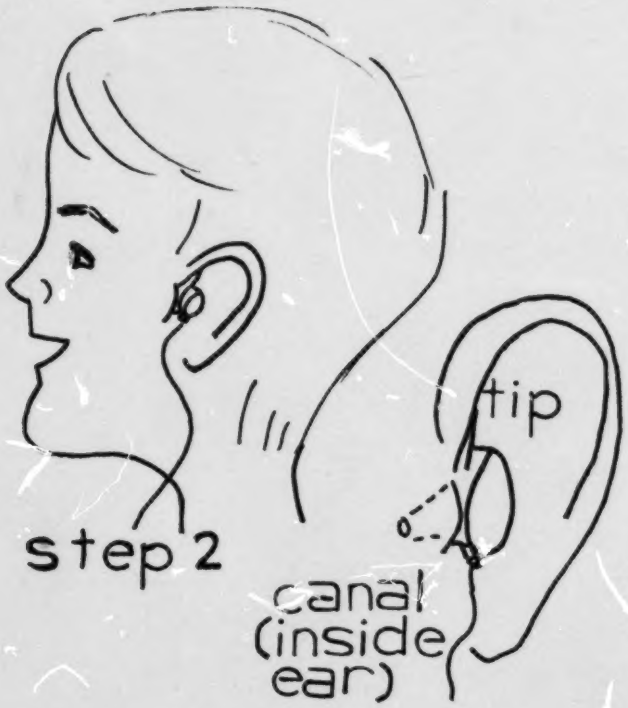
and goes down in the ear. Don't worry, the canal is not long enough to touch the eardrum.

Take off your child's glasses. Put the canal of the earmold in his ear. The tip should be pointed toward the tip of his nose. This is



shown above in step 1.

Turn the earmold so the tip points up. Then wiggle the tip into place. This is shown on the next page in step 2. Now you can turn the aid on and put the glasses on.



Children's ears are all different. Some earmolds go in very easily. Others are very hard to put in. Don't push hard on the earmold. If it won't go in easily, put a **tiny** bit of Vaseline or mineral

oil on it. (Don't let any get into the hole in the canal.) This may help the mold to slip into place. After you are used to putting the earmold in, you shouldn't have to oil it.

Some earmolds are too loose. If the mold seems to wiggle around or fall out easily, it may not fit the ear. Check with the person who made the mold if it does not fit.

Make sure the mold is where it should be. The tip is sometimes hard to put in. When the earmold is in right, it should look something like the picture on page 7.

Don't be surprised if your child doesn't like the earmold in his ear. He probably doesn't like it because it's new. He may try to

pull it out. Try to take his mind off the earmold. Give him a toy he likes to play with.

If your child fusses about the earmold after wearing it a few times, the mold may be hurting him. Take the earmold out of the ear. Then look in the ear carefully. If you see a small red spot or any sign of a sore spot, leave the mold out. Take the mold and your child to the place you got the mold. Ask the audiologist or hearing aid specialist to grind down the mold where it caused the sore spot.

Leave the mold out as long as your child's ear is sore. If it is sore for more than a few days, there may be some other problem. Check with your doctor.

GET CLOSE TO YOUR CHILD

After you put the hearing aid on your child, put his glasses back on. As you play with him, stay close. This will help him to hear you and see you.

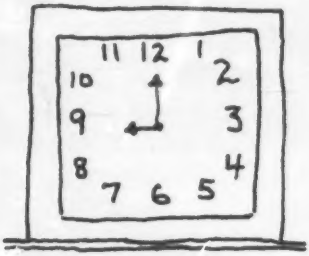
During your listening time you will be talking and making noises. Sound will be clearer if it is within one foot of the hearing aid "mike." When you talk to your child, try to get on the same level as he is. Above all, get close to him.

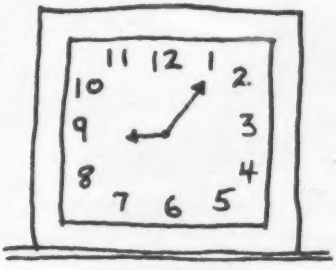
PUT THE AID ON EVERY DAY

Your child should wear the hearing aid every day. At first, plan to put it on at the same time each day. Pick a time when your child is likely to be relaxed. Maybe in the

middle of the morning or afternoon. Whenever it is, try to have a regular time to put on the aid.

If your child enjoys putting on the aid and playing games, he will look forward to it. If he is old enough, he can help you get ready for his listening time. Together you can find the toys and noisemakers. Then you can get the hearing aid and put it on.





Later on your child should wear his aid more. It can be put on two or three times a day. And it can be worn for longer times. Most deaf-blind children should wear their aids all day. Ask the teacher or audiologist for advice about your child. In the beginning the important thing is to wear the hearing aid **every** day.

THE FIRST FEW WEEKS

To get ready for listening time, get your child's hearing aid and any noisemakers you are going to use. Put the hearing aid on your child. Turn the aid on and set the volume where it should be. (If you don't know where to set the volume, ask your child's teacher or

audiologist.) Next get on the same level as your child.

Now talk to your child. This is what you might say and do.

"Where is Bobby?"
"Here he is." (Put your hand on his chest.)

"Where is Bobby's hand?"
"Here is Bobby's hand." (Pat his hand.)

You might hum a song. It could be a child's song or something you hear on the radio. As you hum, clap your hands. Then hum again and clap your child's hands. Another time you can hum and move from side to side as you hold Bobby on your lap. Later you might hum as you walk

together. Take each step in time with your humming.

Instead of humming you could sing or play a record. You can use music from the radio. But be sure to turn the radio off when you are through listening to the music.

You can use toys that make noise. The mother in the picture has a xylophone.

You could also use a pounding toy, a drum, a musicbox, or other toy. You can even use a metal pan and a spoon.

Make the sound first. Then let your child feel the toy. Next let him make the sounds. If you have a pan and a spoon, let him put his

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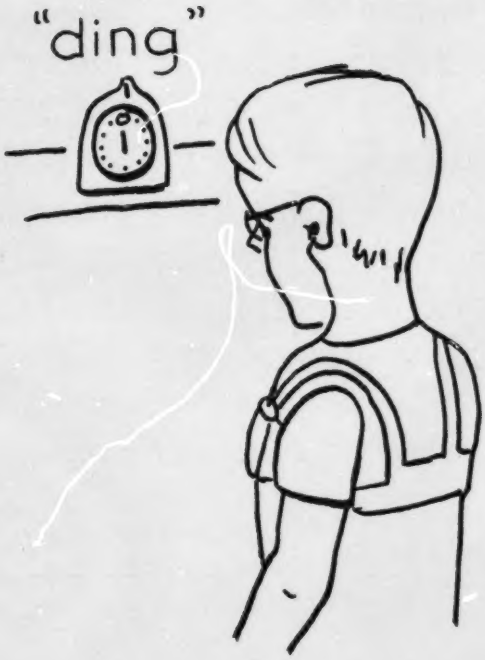
hand on the side of the pan while you hit it. He should be able to feel and hear the sound at the same time.

Children are different. Your child may show interest or pleasure in the sound. His interest may be very short. But it should increase from week to week. When he shows interest, reward him. Page 18 tells about rewards.

Your child might show that he hears a sound by blinking his eyes. Or he might stop what he is doing. This is good, reward him. He may not show any interest in the sound at first. Later on he may show that he enjoys listening to sounds.



Some children will not respond in the beginning. This happens often so don't be disappointed. Go on with talking and playing with noisy toys. Watch for signs he hears the sounds.

Other children may show they don't like the sounds. If this happens, turn down the hearing aid. The sound might have been too loud. If your child continues to object to the sounds, ask your teacher or audiologist what to do.

REWARDS

It's good to reward your child when he does what you want him to do. You could reward him for

listening when you say, *"Bobby."* The reward should make it more likely that he will listen the next time you say, *"Bobby."*

A reward can be something to eat like a little piece of cereal. Or it can be something to do. It might be a pat on the back, a hug, or a kiss. It could be praise — telling your child, *"That's good,"* or, *"Fine."*

Since each child is different, the same thing does not reward everyone. First you need to find out what your child likes. Then use what he likes as a reward. For example, your child may not like cereal. If cereal is not a reward, you can try something else. Maybe he will like raisins, little pieces of apple, or sips of juice. STEPS booklet number 6 tells more about rewards.

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Adults get rewards too. A paycheck is a reward for a week's work. You will get rewards for working with your child.

- ☐ One reward will be when he learns to understand some of the things you want to tell him.

- ☐ Another reward will be when you can understand what he wants.

It will take a long time before you get your rewards. But you can wait because you understand that it will take a long time. A deaf-blind child does not understand that he must wait for a reward. He

must have his reward right away so he knows what it is for.

If you use food as a reward, give very small pieces. Don't use food as a reward just before a meal, or right afterward. If you are working on making voice sounds, you will have to wait until your child finishes eating the reward.

BEGIN A LITTLE BIT AT A TIME

Talk to your child's teacher about what to do during listening time. Plan to take very small steps in the direction you want to go. These are some things you might want to do in the beginning.

☐ Bobby will wear his hearing aid for five minutes at a time.

☐ Bobby will notice a sound three times during our listening time.

- ☐ Bobby will walk with me once around the room while I hum.
- ☐ Bobby will pound the pan with a spoon when I pound it.

KEEP A RECORD

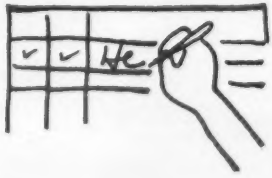
If you keep a record, you can see your child is making progress. Sometimes it will seem like he isn't improving. This may be because he is improving very slowly. Or it may be that he is getting used to doing something new. Or it could be that he is taking a while to learn what is expected.

After you and the teacher work out some small steps, begin to keep a record. Look at the record

on the next page. It shows what Bobby did for one week. There are two small steps or goals: (1) Bobby will wear his hearing aid every day. (2) He will wear it for at least five minutes each time.

You can see that he reached goal number one, but not goal number two. He wore his aid every day. But he did not wear it for five minutes.

If you try to keep a record each day, you will be more likely to see the small changes. Keeping a record can take less than one minute a day.



WEEK OF May 27	Goal 1 – Wear aid	Goal 2 – 5 min.	NOTES
SUNDAY	✓	1 min.	fussy today
MONDAY	✓	1 min.	heard spoon on pan ?
TUESDAY	✓	3 min	didn't object to putting aid on
WEDNESDAY	✓	2 min.	
THURSDAY	✓	2 min	liked to hit pan with spoon
FRIDAY	✓	3 min.	same →
SATURDAY	✓	2 min.	fussed a lot

REMEMBER—

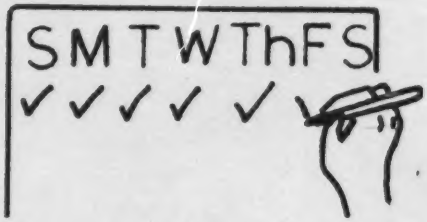
① PROTECT THE HEARING AID.

See page 1.

② GET CLOSE TO YOUR CHILD.

See page 10.

③ PUT THE AID ON EVERY DAY.

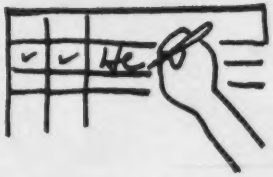


See page 10.

④ BEGIN A LITTLE BIT AT A TIME.

See page 23.

⑤ KEEP A RECORD.



See page 25.

A FEW MORE WORDS OF ADVICE

- ☐ If you have questions, ask someone who knows about deaf-blind children. Ask your child's teacher, audiologist, therapist, or doctor.

- ☐ Try not to be discouraged. A long distance can be covered in very small steps.

WEEK OF _____	GOAL 1	GOAL 2	NOTES
SUNDAY			
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			

The Basic Booklets in the STEPS Series

1. Beginning to Use a Hearing Aid
2. Words and Meanings: The Problem of Deaf-Blindness
3. Words and Meanings: Helping the Deaf-Blind Child
4. General Information for Parents of a Deaf-Blind Child
5. How to Take Care of a Hearing Aid
6. Rewards and How to Use Them

A JOURNEY
OF A THOUSAND MILES
MUST BEGIN
WITH A SINGLE STEP.
— LAO TZU

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